



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Accomplishment Report

The **Alpena Fishery Resources Office (FRO)** is located in Alpena, Michigan and works to meet U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fishery and Ecosystem goals within Lake Huron, Western Lake Erie, and connecting waters of the St. Marys River, St. Clair River, and Detroit River. Activities include Aquatic Species Conservation and Management, Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management, Cooperation with Native Americans, Leadership in Science and Technology, Partnerships and Accountability, Public Use, and Workforce Management – all of which are conducted in alignment with the Service Fisheries Program Vision for the Future. The station is one of many field offices located within Region 3, the Great Lakes Big Rivers Region.

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Second Year of Lake Sturgeon Survey Begins on the Saginaw River Watershed

*Submitted by James Boase
Fishery Biologist*

Fishery Biologists from Alpena FRO working with volunteers Larry Hess, Barry Pulaski, and Larry Dinsmore began sampling for lake sturgeon on the Saginaw River watershed during early April. This project was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network with the primary objective of determining locations where lake sturgeon may be spawning in the watershed. Potential lake sturgeon spawning sites have been identified below dams located on the Cass, Shiawassee and Tittabawassee rivers. Sampling gear has been placed below the dams to collect eggs from lake sturgeon and other species that are spawning at those sites. Eggs are collected and transported to the USGS laboratory in Ann Arbor where they are being hatched in incubation jars. Biologist Jeff Allen (USGS) has been overseeing the aquaculture portion of the study and is beginning to identify fish that have been hatching. Following the spring spawning survey we will begin sampling habitat parameters to determine if the system could support juvenile lake sturgeon. This effort, if successful, would be a major step for the rehabilitation of lake sturgeon in Lake Huron.



This effort provided a unique opportunity to create new partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental agencies and volunteers to achieve common Great Lakes management

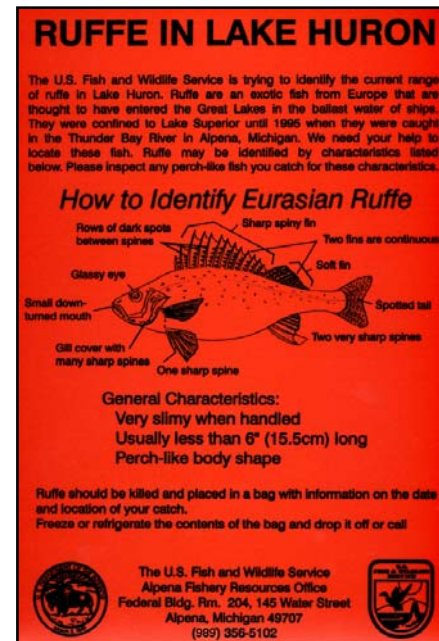
objectives. Maintaining these collaborative relationships allows for the most efficient use of limited human and fiscal resources. This project is consistent with the “Partnerships and Accountability”, “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management”, and “Leadership in Science and Technology” focus areas of the Fisheries Program’s Vision for the Future.

Eurasian Ruffe Removal Effort Conducted in Thunder Bay River, Lake Huron

Submitted Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist

During April, Alpena FRO conducted efforts to detect and remove Eurasian ruffe (ruffe) from the only known Lake Huron population located in the Thunder Bay River near Alpena in northeastern Michigan. This annual effort was initiated in 2002 to remove adult ruffe prior to spawning. Small mesh gillnets were fished at 3 to 5 index locations and targeted water temperatures and timing of when ruffe were captured in past years.

In 2006, no ruffe were not captured following a total of 44 nights effort. Ruffe have not been captured from Thunder Bay since 2003. Alpena FRO staff including Heather Rawlings, Susan Wells, Aaron Woldt, Scott Koproski, Adam Kowalski, Jerry McClain, and Anjanette Bowen participated in this project.



Ruffe are an aquatic invasive species native to Eurasia that were accidentally introduced into the Great Lakes via ballast water from an ocean-going vessel. They are related to yellow perch but do not attain a size that is desirable for sportfishing harvest and consumption and are thought to compete with native species for food and habitat resources. Ruffe were designated an aquatic nuisance species in 1992 by the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. Ruffe were first discovered in Lake Huron at Thunder Bay in 1995.

Efforts to control and monitor invasive species provides benefit to native species. This project addresses the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities for "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management".

St. Mary River Lake Sturgeon Project

Submitted by Scott Koproski
Fishery Biologist

During the month of April, Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski completed preparation for field work and initiated coordination activities for the St. Marys River Lake Sturgeon Project. The project is scheduled to begin in May and will continue until the end of August. Koproski was awarded a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to assess lake sturgeon

in the St. Marys River, the connecting waterway between lakes Superior and Huron. Partners on the project include Lake Superior State University, Bay Mills Indian Community, the Soo Area Sportsman, and eight volunteers all of which have donated their time and a vessel to this project.

Funding awarded from the NFWF will be used to capture and implant sonic telemetry tags in lake sturgeon utilizing the St. Marys River. Anecdotal information indicates that lake sturgeon were commonly encountered in the St. Marys River. However, very little is currently known about population size, available habitat, and spawning locations within this system. By capturing and following these fish we may be able to provide more definitive answers for researchers and managers. Without the help of the partners, volunteers, and the NFWF this project would not be possible.

This work is an example for Alpena FRO's commitment to the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", "Partnerships and Accountability", and "Cooperation with Native American Tribes".

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Field Season Begins with Explosion of Work

*Submitted Heather Rawlings
Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

The Alpena FRO's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program field season began in a dramatic fashion in early April due to an early snowmelt and warmer than average temperatures. A record number of landowners have contacted Biologist Heather Rawlings with requests for site visits and the Service's involvement on stream, wetland, and grassland improvement projects. Sixteen site visits were conducted in eight counties, two surveys were completed, two fieldwork planning meetings were held, and Rawlings participated in Earth Day, a large outreach event targeted at schoolchildren held in Lansing, MI.

A record number of requests ensure projects that will be chosen for funding will be higher quality sites with more partner participation. The Alpena FRO annually provides approximately \$180,000 towards habitat restoration projects in Northern Michigan through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.



Completion of habitat restoration projects contribute toward the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" priority of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Post Monitoring of the Little Ocqueoc Fish Passage Project in Northern Lower Michigan

*Submitted by Susan Wells
Fishery Biologist*

On April 11, 2006 Biologist Wells and Huron Pines RC&D conducted a post construction survey of a 2005 project site on the Little Ocqueoc Creek. The survey was completed to document changes in the morphology of the stream that may be occurring. Wells and personnel from Huron Pines RC&D had conducted a pre-construction survey on August 31, 2005. The Little Ocqueoc is a tributary to the Ocqueoc River, which is a state designated blue ribbon trout stream. The site contained twin perched culverts that prohibited fish movement into the upper stretches of the system. The Presque Isle County Road Commission completed the project in October of 2005 using a bottomless railroad tanker car.



Both pre and post-construction surveys included a full longitudinal profile of 500 feet of the stream above and below the site. A comprehensive pebble count was also conducted to document substrate above and below the structure. Kris Bruestle from Huron Pines RC&D entered the information for both evaluations into a computer program which drew the profile and calculated the dominate substrate. The post-construction survey data indicates that a change has occurred in the plunge pool dimensions below the new structure. However, the hydraulics of the system are still conforming to changes resulting from installation of the new bottomless structure. In the fall of 2006 the survey will be repeated to continue documenting any morphological changes that may be occurring. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has provided historical fishery data for this area and has plans to return to this site for a fishery assessment within the next two years. The fishery data combined with the morphological data will provide a comprehensive look at changes in the morphology and biology of system before and after a restoration project has occurred.

This is an example of collaboration between government and non-governmental organizations to enhance aquatic habitat which will benefit fish and wildlife resources. This project enhances fish passage of native brook trout within the Ocqueoc River watershed. The project involves collaboration between many partners and addresses the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priority of "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" and "Partnerships and Accountability".

Severance Creek Bliss Road Fish Passage Project Completed

*Submitted Susan Wells
Fishery Biologist*

On April 20, the Antrim County Road Commission completed a culvert replacement at the Bliss Road crossing on Severance Creek in Northern Lower Michigan. The project identified two

undersized and perched culverts that negatively impacted native brook trout passage in the Jordan River Watershed. The culvert also contributed to ponding of water upstream causing water temperatures to warm. The project was completed by replacing the perched culverts with a bottomless culvert. Replacement of the culvert opened up approximately 3 miles of aquatic habitat for native brook trout. Oversight for project construction was provided by Alpena FRO Biologists Wells and Enterline and Kim Balke from the Conservation Resources Alliance (CRA). Funding for this project was provided by the Region 3 Fish Passage Program, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Service, the Antrim County Road Commission, and in kind services from CRA.

This is an example of collaboration between federal, state and local governments and watershed groups to enhance aquatic habitat which will benefit fish and wildlife resources including native brook trout. This project involved collaboration between many partners and addresses the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priority of "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management".

Leadership in Science and Technology

2005 Lake Huron Lake Whitefish Distribution Study Data Compiled

*Submitted Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist*

In April 2006, Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt compiled lake whitefish tagging data from Service and partner agencies in a shared database as part of a Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act funded Lake Huron lake whitefish distribution study. The goals of this study are to determine the spatial distribution and movement patterns of 8 selected lake whitefish stocks in Lake Huron and to determine the contribution of each stock to commercial fishery yields. The 8 stocks selected for this study are Detour, Alpena (Middle Island & Thunder Bay), Saginaw Bay, Burnt Island, South Bay mouth, the Fishing Islands, Douglas Point, and Sarnia. Partner agencies for this study include the Service, Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Bruce Power, Chippewas of Nawash, Saugeen First Nation, and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

In the fall of 2005, over 8,500 lake whitefish were tagged by the 7 partner agencies across all sampling sites. From 2003 through 2005, over 24,000 lake whitefish have been tagged and released. Data was entered by each agency into a standard database designed by Woldt and sent to the Alpena FRO for inclusion in a central study database. Woldt provided each agency with data collection protocols and database formats prior to the study's start. Woldt has been working with agency data representatives to ensure data accuracy and timely entry. To date, data has been entered and proofed from 6 agencies. Once all data has been entered, Woldt will distribute copies of the central database to all partners. The full database is needed to accurately process tag returns and issue rewards. Each tag carries a \$5 US reward.

Serving as database manager for this study aids efforts to determine the spatial distribution and movement patterns of lake whitefish stocks and to determine the contribution of each stock to the commercial fishery. This will allow for better harvest management and protection of lake whitefish stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Leadership in Science and Technology" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Partnerships and Accountability

Lake Sturgeon Survey Begins on the Maumee River

*Submitted by James Boase
Fishery Biologist*

Fishery Biologist James Boase joined forces with Biologists Jim McFee and Chris Vandergoot from Ohio Department of Natural Resources - Division of Wildlife to conduct a lake sturgeon survey of the Maumee River. The Maumee River is a tributary to western Lake Erie and supports Ohio's largest spawning run of walleye. For many years recreational fishers targeting walleye on the Maumee have occasionally caught lake sturgeon below Providence Dam and Grand Rapids Dam. Preliminary genetic information collected from lake sturgeon captured by commercial fishers near the mouth of the Maumee River suggests that there may exist a distinct population of lake sturgeon in western Lake Erie. This project was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation with the primary objective of determining if lake sturgeon are spawning in the Maumee watershed and where. Following the spring spawning survey we will begin sampling habitat parameters to determine if the system could support juvenile lake sturgeon. This effort, if successful, would be a major step for the rehabilitation of lake sturgeon in western Lake Erie.



This effort provided an opportunity to enhance our partnership with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources-Division of Wildlife to achieve common Great Lakes management objectives. Maintaining these collaborative relationships allows for the most efficient use of limited human and fiscal resources. This project is consistent with the "Partnerships and Accountability", "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", and "Leadership in Science and Technology" focus areas of the Fisheries Program's Vision for the Future.

Alpena FRO Assists in Retrieving a Lake Sturgeon from a Trap Net

*Submitted by Adam Kowalski
Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

On April 19, Fishery Biologist Adam Kowalski was contacted by Warren Beers, a state licensed commercial fisher on Saginaw Bay seeking assistance in recovering a lake sturgeon from a commercial trap net. Kowalski traveled to Saginaw Bay and assisted in removing the sturgeon from the net and recording biological data on the fish.



The sturgeon had been previously tagged by both the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Lake Winnebago) and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (Marquette Station). Kowalski recorded the tag numbers and contacted both agencies to provide the updated data. Warren Beers is one of several commercial fishers that assist Alpena FRO in collecting data from lake sturgeon caught as by-catch during their normal fishing seasons.

This work is consistent with the “Partnerships and Accountability” priority of the Service’s Fisheries Program Vision for the Future and enhances open, interactive communication between the Fisheries Program and its Partners.

Public Use

2006 Aquatic Invasive Species Awareness and Earth Day Event

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist*

Live sea lamprey were a popular attraction at the third annual Earth Day Celebration and Bring Your Child to Work Day event that took place on April 20 at Constitution Hall in Lansing, Michigan. Heather Rawlings, Alpena FRO and Bob Kavetsky, East Lansing FO participated in the event providing information on invasive species awareness and the USGS Hammond Bay Biological Station provided the sea lamprey, an invasive fish species. The event was hosted by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Michigan Department of Agriculture, and the Michigan Department of Natural



Resources and was held to educate school aged students about the Earth's resources and environmental issues.

Over 500 children, some with parents and some with school groups, attended the event. This activity was a great opportunity to partner with state conservation programs to provide a unified approach and public education about aquatic invasive species. Conservation and protection of invasive species is important in order to conserve and protect native species and public education about invasives is important for slowing and preventing their spread to new areas. This activity also supports the "Public Use" and "Partnerships and Accountability" portions of the Fisheries Program's Vision for the Future.

Alpena FRO Meets to Discuss Participation in Regional Media Workshop

*Submitted by Jerry McClain
Fishery Biologist*

On April 20, Project Leader McClain, along with Michigan DNR-Alpena Fisheries Research Station Chief Jim Johnson, met with Peter Annin, Associate Director of the Institutes for Journalism & Natural Resources (IJNR) to discuss participation in an upcoming workshop. The IJNR hosts a workshop each year to bring natural resource leaders and journalists together in a workshop session to discuss regional issues of interest. A major objective of the workshop is to stimulate increased interest by journalists in writing stories on natural resource topics. This summer the event will be held in northern Michigan with numerous stops to highlight aspects of natural resource management. The Fisheries segment will be held in the Alpena area and McClain and Johnson have been asked to participate.

Topics that will be discussed in the Fisheries module will include the changing food web in Lake Huron, the 2000 Consent Decree, and Sea Lamprey Control. McClain will participate in a panel discussion on the Consent Decree and how implementation has affected Lake Huron fisheries. The event is scheduled to take place in late July and at least a portion of the event will be held in Alpena. It is anticipated that journalists will follow up the event with stories on topics discussed.

Participation in outreach events such as this will enhance media understanding of the roles the various natural resource agencies have in protection and management of those resources. Service and Alpena FRO roles and responsibilities will be better understood by the media and relationships between Great Lakes journalists and the station will be enhanced. This activity is consistent with and supportive of the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Public Use" priorities of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.



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**U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alpena FRO
145 Water Street, Alpena, MI 49707**

Phone: 989/356-5102

For more information on Alpena FRO programs and activities or to view other station reports visit our website located at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/alpena/>.